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F. J. Gray.

on

Amos Lawrence.

Oct. 1853.

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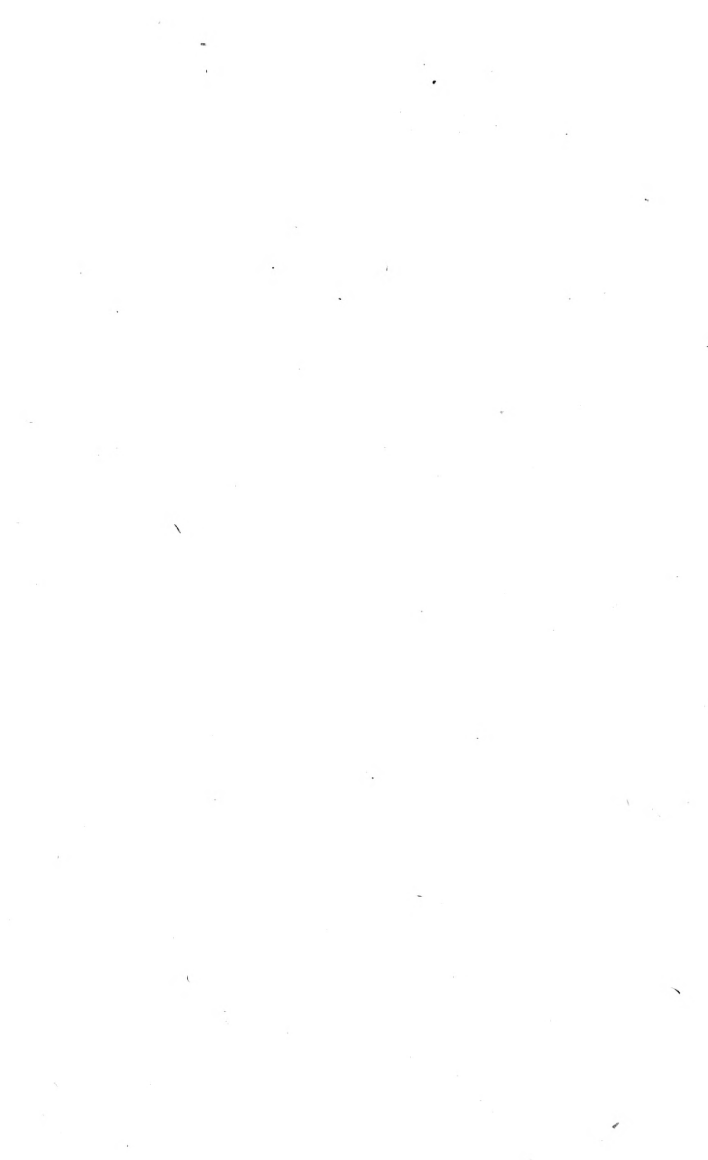
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Book L415





TRIBUTE
TO
A GOOD MAN.



EXTRACT

FROM

A S E R M O N

DELIVERED AT THE

BULFINCH-STREET CHURCH, BOSTON,

JAN. 9, 1853,

THE SUNDAY FOLLOWING THE INTERMENT

OF THE LATE

AMOS LAWRENCE.

BY REV. F. T. GRAY.

BOSTON:

JOHN WILSON & SON.

1853.

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE

Respectfully Dedicated

TO THE

FAMILY AND KINDRED OF THE LATE LAMENTED

AMOS LAWRENCE,

BY ONE WHO WOULD OFFER A GRATEFUL TRIBUTE TO THE

MEMORY OF HIM WHO SO WELL DESERVED

THE EXALTED TITLE

OF THE

Poor Man's Christian Friend.

THE text of the Sermon, from which the following extract was taken, was the seventh verse of the second chapter of Paul's Second Epistle to Timothy: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

After contrasting the views and maxims of the worldly-minded with those of the Christian, and stating the claims of the Young Men's Christian Union, the Discourse closed with the following tribute to the character and memory of one who was the early patron and devoted friend of that Society.

THE GOOD MAN.

AMONG the warmest friends of the Young Men's Christian Union was one, whose departure from among us this community has recently been called to mourn, — one who was beloved by all who knew him ; whose wide, expansive benevolence and Christian charity won the admiration of those of every name and sect ; who so truly loved the Saviour, and was so truly baptized into his spirit, the spirit of divine and heavenly love, that he became through it his blessed messenger ; so that all rejoiced who came within his influence, as “ he went about doing good,” ready to take each believer by the hand, saying, “ One is our master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.”

As we saw him on his errands of mercy, just on the verge of threescore years and ten, how, as his benignant smile beamed upon us, did he remind us of “ the disciple Jesus loved ;” who, when so feeble

from the infirmities of age, could only say, in addressing the people, "Little children, love one another"! That smile, shadowing forth a happy Christian spirit within, was a benediction indeed, when it beamed upon us! May it prove an incentive to us, to show our love to God in our love to man, which was the whole tenor of his example; remembering that "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," not in any name ye may adopt, or church ye may join, but "in your love one toward another."

Long has it been my privilege to know this good man. In a letter to me a few days before his death, he signed himself "A friend of long years past." Yes! he was an old friend to me, and, as I well know, a long-trying friend to the poor, the forsaken, and suffering, as he was also a friend to those "whom the Saviour took in his arms and blessed;" for he was always ready and rejoiced to do what he could, that the lambs of the flock and the children of the destitute might be instructed from the Word of God, "and made wise unto everlasting life."

This love was seen not merely in kind words and good thoughts, but in benevolent action: he was an active Christian. How did my young heart feel this

twenty-five years ago, when among a little band of Sabbath-school teachers who were laboring at the northerly section of our city, instructing the children of the less-favored and the poor; at a time when our hearts were sad, and almost discouraged; when we were endeavoring to awaken a deeper and wider interest, by inviting the parents and friends to come in and see us. How cheerfully, at our invitation, did he come to the first examination of the school, and encourage us by his presence, his words, and his gifts; and when those little ones, many from the abodes of poverty and want, repeated their sweet hymns, how did the tears course down that good man's cheeks, causing him to say, as he pressed my hand, "This is a beautiful sight, and one I cannot witness without tears"!

Never shall I forget those words, nor the thoughts which at that time they suggested. Is there anything more delightful (such was our thought) than to witness a man engaged in a large and extensive business, a man of wealth and influence, coming down and mingling freely and kindly with a band of humble Sunday-school teachers,—an act inspiring them with new courage and hope, at a moment when, from the cold indifference and opposition then existing towards these institutions, both heart and

hope had begun to fail us, and the school itself was well nigh being closed. If he had done nothing else, this humble Christian act should be a standing monument to his memory; for it was from this school, thus encouraged and sustained, that arose one of the noblest charities that has ever blessed the world,—the Ministry at Large.

The interest this good man took in children was constantly manifested, and continued to the last. Never was he happier than when surrounded by them. There are some among you who may remember seeing him here at the anniversary celebration of our Sunday-school, some three years since. After he had sat for a little time in this pulpit, and gazed at the interesting sight of so many children gathered before him, and listened to their sweet voices, alternately mingling with those of the orphan and the blind who were on each side of him, he said to me, his eyes filled with tears, “This is heavenly; but I must leave you; it is more, I fear, than I can bear, for you know I am a minute man.”

This active Christian spirit of love was witnessed by me also last summer, when that sad disaster occurred by which so many lives were lost on board the ill-fated steamboat, the “Henry Clay;” which you may remember was particularly alluded to from

this place on the following sabbath. On reading that sermon, which was afterwards published, our departed friend immediately called on me and desired its circulation, with the earnest request that a memorial to Congress might be prepared at once and forwarded. When others were seeking and enjoying the sea-breeze and a purer air in the country, this good man, notwithstanding the heat then so oppressive, was engaged in going round, speaking on the subject to the most influential, obtaining their approval; and, though all were saying, "It will avail little, and do no good," still did he persevere, unchanged in purpose. At the same time he wrote personally to different individuals at Washington, preparing them for the memorial, which soon after followed; when the law relating to steamboats, which had cost so much labor in preparation, but which had been lying on the table for months untouched, was at once taken up and passed. The energy, activity, and perseverance which this good man then manifested, while so many others were indifferent to the matter, will never be forgotten.

And now perhaps the young among us may inquire, Who was this man, and whence arose those traits of character which caused him to be so universally beloved and lamented? I answer, that he

came to this city, many years since, a poor young man. It so happened that he remained longer than he at first purposed; for he designed only a visit, intending to return again to his home. He attended * yon venerable church soon after he came hither, and heard the eloquent and gifted Buckminster. At once he selected him as his minister, and that as his church, and ever after was present, morning and afternoon, when his health permitted. He listened, and welcomed to his heart the blessed teachings of Jesus Christ, and made it his aim to be his follower, and to "do good as he had opportunity." As this was his great endeavor, his delight was in the law of the Lord, and daily at his fireside the morning and evening incense of prayer rose to heaven.

Mr. Lawrence was a religious man in every sense of the word, dedicating his time and wealth to the service of God, and the good of his fellow-men: hence he was "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." He loved the sanctuary, and its very dust was sacred to him. He visited the distressed, and it was his delight to distribute the gifts laid upon the altar for the poor, personally, to the members of the household of faith.

If you would know the origin of all that he did, which blessed so many hearts, which made him the

friend of the widow and the orphan, and a father to those who had none to help,—why it is that all around us the tears of sorrow are shed, — that every one feels that the community has sustained a severe loss, and that the poor and suffering are bereft of a benefactor and friend,—you must trace it to its true source, and say that he was a religious man and true Christian, and that he simply carried out and exemplified the holy principles of the gospel. This was its source. In this his benevolence and world-wide charity had their origin. It was this, young men, which makes his memory so precious, his name so dear, and will long embalm him sacredly in the grateful hearts of hundreds of the sorrowing children of men, who will bedew his grave with tears, and rise up hereafter and call him blessed. What power did religion impart to this benefactor of his race! What influence did it enable him to exert with the talent entrusted to his care!

Bring now before your minds this poor young man going to that house of God, more than forty years ago. He was unknown, a stranger among strangers, seeing around him there the most distinguished men in the Commonwealth assembled in worship. He hears the word, and is impressed.

He resolves to follow out the instruction received, and, in imitation of his Master, to devote himself to doing good to his fellow-men. Forty years and over found him faithfully going up to that temple, enjoying its privileges, and gratefully improving its services and rites; till at last, when the summons came, his spirit, all ready and prepared, gently passed to its heavenly home! And who would wish to call him back, that saw the smile on his countenance when within a day's journey of the tomb, which seemed to have received new radiance from the spirit-world, upon which he was so soon to enter? Oh, well might we then have said,—

“Mark but the radiance of his eye;
 The smile upon his wasted cheek:
 They tell us of his glory nigh,
 In language that no tongue can speak.”

How little did this poor young man think, when he first entered that church, that by fidelity to the truths of Jesus Christ there proclaimed, when he should pass from earth, grateful hearts, true and sincere mourners, would go up thither, and throng its very aisles, that they might mingle their tears, and pay their last tribute of respect to him, their true benefactor and Christian friend! Yet so it was, and as beautiful as it was a striking testimony

from the community to the excellence and worth of a humble, benevolent, and sincere Christian.

Well might the merchant, and those in his employ, cease on such an occasion from their labors, and go up to the house of prayer; and well that those who were Judges should cause silence to reign in their halls, as they and the great men of the land went up also to that house of mourning; for such a life as had just closed on earth was a blessing to this whole community; and God should be gratefully remembered in his temple, for the gift of such a Christian example and character.

And it was as beautifully appropriate as it was inexpressibly touching, to witness children gather round his mortal remains, and take their last look in his "Father's House," which he had loved so much; and, as they strewed beautiful flowers upon his lifeless form, that they should sing their sweet farewell hymn, "We have lost a father." Well, too, was it that ministers of the different denominations should unite in the last services at this good man's funeral.*

How little did he think, years ago, when he first entered that time-hallowed sanctuary, that *that* would be the last earthly dwelling from whence he

* Rev. Dr. Sharp, Rev. Dr. Lothrop, and Rev. Dr. Hopkins.

would be borne as he passed to the grave ; that the plaintive notes of that richly-toned organ, which had so often uplifted the spirit of the sainted Buckminster, would softly breathe his last requiem ; and that the funeral toll of that solemn bell would call more of the sorrowing and mourning for him thither than could be gathered within its walls ! Yet so it was, — a touching tribute to a good man and beloved Christian.

Oh ! may that beautiful character inspire every young man with the holy resolve and purpose to live a Christian life, — to be governed by Christian principles, and the word of God ; assured, that in every act of kindness and beneficence he shall in no wise lose his reward, and that the memory of the good man and the Christian will be blessed and faithfully cherished in the hearts of children's children.

“ Go, spirit of the sainted dead !

Go to thy longed-for happy home ;

The tears of man are o'er thee shed,

The voice of angels bids thee come.

Though earth may boast one gem the less,

May not e'en heaven the richer be ?

Oh ! may we on thy footsteps press,

To share thy blest eternity.”

WE HAVE LOST A FATHER.

The following original hymn by Josiah A. Stearns, Esq., was sung at the obsequies, Jan. 4th, by a choir of young girls from the "Lawrence Association of the Mather School," while surrounding the last earthly remains of their deceased friend.

TUNE — "*Home again.*" *

He has gone — he has gone —
 To his spirit-home ;
 And, oh ! it thrills his soul with joy,
 In realms of bliss to roam.
 But we must shed the burning tear
 To part with him we love ;
 And now for us the world is gloom,
 Since he has gone above.
 He has gone — he has gone —
 To his spirit-home ;
 And, oh ! it thrills his soul with joy,
 In realms of bliss to roam.

Weeping eyes — broken hearts —
 Oft he bid rejoice ;
 And homes of woe were full of praise,
 That heard his loving voice :
 For oft he soothed poor sorrow's tear,
 And wept when they were sad ;
 And many were the orphan-forms
 His generous bounty clad.

* *Home Again* " was sung in hearing of Mr. Lawrence by the children on his last visit to their school, when he was accompanied by Gen. Franklin Pierce.

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Weeping eyes — broken hearts —
Oft he did rejoice ;
And homes of woe were full of praise,
That heard his loving voice.

Gentle words — heavenly thoughts —
Linger where he trod :
And, oh ! it was our childhood's charm
To hear him talk of God.
Then let us ever strive to live,
As he, our friend, has done ;
That we may reach the happy life
Which he has now begun.
Gentle words — heavenly thoughts —
Linger where he trod ;
And, oh ! it was our childhood's charm
To hear him talk of God.

Fare thee well — fare thee well !
We around thee weep ;
But, oh ! we love thee, father, still,
And angels guard thy sleep.
The kind " OLD OAK " for us no more
Shall sheltering branches spread ;
And, oh ! our hearts are wrung with grief,
For he we loved is dead.
Fare thee well — fare thee well !
We around thee weep ;
But, oh ! we love thee, father, still,
And angels guard thy sleep.

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